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NSC BRIEFING

12 JUNE 1956

BACKGROUND--ESTIMATED BALANCES IN PAKISTAN POLITICS

1. Pakistan's physical division into two parts is paralleled, politically, by two provincial governments (east and west), subordinate to the National Government. However, except for East Pakistan, no elections have ever been held, and the members of the Provincial and National Assemblies have been appointed to their positions. The nation's present political struggle is thus based on individuals, rather than political parties or differing policies. To understand the present crisis, therefore, it is necessary to identify six significant elements which dominate the political scene. These are (chart):

a. The executive group: This group centers on President (and former Governor General) Mirza, Prime Minister Chaudhri Mohammad Ali (a former civil servant, now a nominal member of the Moslem League), and General Ayub, the Army commander-in-chief. This executive group--raised in a tradition of pre-independence authoritarian rule--is the most important single force in Pakistan politics.

(1) Reports of tension between all three of these men have become more frequent in recent months, and the executive group is clearly less united now than when it assumed control of Pakistan twenty months ago, under the leadership of former Governor general Ghulam Mohammad.

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(2) Although Prime Minister Chaudhri's national government (chart) rests on a coalition of two political parties--the once all-powerful Moslem League and [ ] 25X6 Bengali politicians entitled the United Front--Chaudhri and Mirza now find themselves--on the provincial level--in the paradoxical position of opposing the Moslem League in West Pakistan, and of having twice been forced to suspend the United Front's government in East Pakistan.

b. A second force, the Republican Party, is a newcomer to Pakistan politics, and was founded only two months ago. Composed mainly of renegade Moslem Leaguers, it enjoys Mirza's and Chaudhri's support in West Pakistan's provincial assembly.

(1) At the moment, the RP exists only in West Pakistan, where within the past few weeks it has managed to obtain a precarious voting majority in the provincial assembly, through influence and intimidation.

(2) The RP probably will control about 25% of the seats in the Pakistan National Assembly (chart), when that body meets this autumn.

c. A third force is the Moslem League, Pakistan's oldest political party. The league controlled the provincial government of West Pakistan until its leaders revolted against Mirza's insistence on continuance of a non-Leaguer as the province's Chief Minister and precipitated the present struggle. Despite the split-off of the RP, the League remains a powerful force in West Pakistan and presumably will leave the national coalition and be in opposition when the National Assembly meets.

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(1) ML strength in East Pakistan, once dominant, was almost completely destroyed in March 1954, when the League was overwhelmingly defeated in the only province-wide popular election yet held in Pakistan.

d. Next is the United Front, a group of

25X6

25X6 [redacted] Bengali politicians which brought about the Moslem League's defeat in East Pakistan's 1954 elections. As the party forming the provincial government in East Pakistan, the UF has enjoyed Mirza's support.

(1) Together with the Moslem League, the UF makes up the political coalition that forms the national government. It holds about 20% of the seats in the National Assembly.

25X6

e. Next is the Awami League,

25X6 [redacted] whose action in getting the East Pakistan provincial assembly to reject the budget presented by the United Front on 22 May '56 precipitated the National Government's second declaration of "Direct Rule" there.

(1) Headed nationally by H. S. Suhrawardy, and in East Pakistan by the leftist Maulana Bashani, the AL holds about 29% of the votes in the East Pakistan provincial assembly and 17% in the National Assembly.

f. Last are the Hindu Parties, which represent the interests of 20% of East Pakistan's population and hold 20% of East Pakistan's provincial assembly seats as well as 13% of the National Assembly. The Hindu Parties constitute a potentially decisive factor in the East Pakistan struggle between the United Front and the Awami League, but have not yet committed themselves. Most Hindu Parties are probably on the side of the Awami League.

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g. Other groups, including Christian and independent representatives, are without political significance.

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